

News Release

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge

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For Immediate Release

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Plovers Return; Refuge Beach to Close

The ocean beach at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge will close to all public access April 1st in order to provide undisturbed nesting habitat for the piping plover, a small shorebird that is listed as threatened on the federal endangered species list. The small section of beach that would normally remain open to the public at Lot 1 will also be closed until further notice because of significant damage that was caused to the boardwalk by a recent storm. Sections of the beach may be reopened in July if it is determined such action will not be detrimental to the plovers' nesting success. Generally, the entire beach is reopened in mid-late August after the last plover chick fledges.

Refuge beach closures, initiated in 1991, have proven very beneficial for the birds as the number of nesting pairs and fledglings (young which have reached the flying stage) has significantly increased. In 1987, for example, only a single pair of piping plovers was recorded at the refuge and none of their young fledged. During 2012, the refuge beach supported 27 nesting pairs and fledged 39 young.

Visitors are reminded that other areas of the refuge will remain open including the Salt Pannes Wildlife Observation Area, North Pool Overlook, Hellcat Wildlife Observation Area and associated interpretive trail, Pines Trail, Stage Island Pool Observation Tower and Overlook and the Lot 5 boardwalk (which provides views of, but no access to, the beach). Due to the popularity of the refuge, vehicle capacity is periodically reached with a subsequent temporary closure. An early arrival helps visitors avoid this inconvenience. A daily fee of \$5/vehicle, \$2 walk-on or bicycle, remains in effect, with a \$20 annual pass also available. Also, other beaches are available in the area including those in Newbury and Newburyport on the northern end of Plum Island, Salisbury Beach in Salisbury, and the beach at Crane Memorial Reservation in Ipswich.

The reconstruction of the gravel portion of the refuge road this spring will cause additional public access limitations to certain areas of the refuge. For the very latest information about what areas on the refuge are open or closed, please check the refuge web site: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/parkerriver/>.